

Thorough good

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## A Taproot of Tidewater Today

# A Sleepy English Parish Saw Adam Thorowgood Born 1604

By Dick Hardin

The ancient parish of Grimston, a few miles from King's Lynn in the County of Norfolk, England, has special significance for citizens of Tidewater.

There is little in the sleepy parish to attract casual attention. By passed by progress and off the beaten tourist track, it dozes today in obscurity as it did in the days of the Reformation. A closer look at the old country village, much like all others near the bleak and wind-blown North Sea coast, however, reveals a taproot of Tidewater's present.

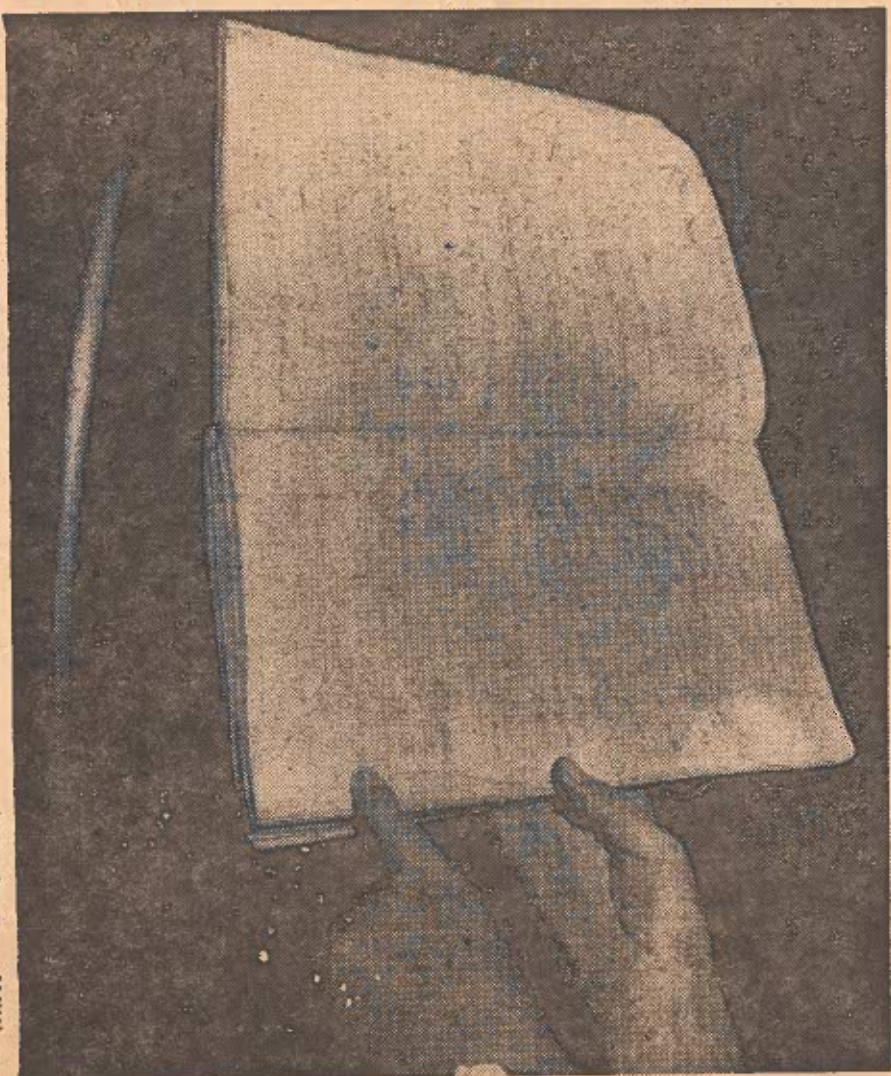
It was here in 1604 that Adam Thorowgood was born. It was here that he grew to restless manhood to fulfill his destiny as one of Virginia's early greats.

Young Adam left Grimston in 1625 to seek his fortune in the new world. Why? He was well born. His family enjoyed high connections in the England of Oliver Cromwell Adam, though, the ninth son of a Puritan rector, had no hopes of an inheritance, so vital to a gentleman's career. The success he achieved on his own in Tidewater is recorded in the annals of Virginia history.

From the lowly status of indentured servant in 1625, he rose in a few short years to a position of power and influence among Tidewater gentry. At the time of his early death in 1640 at the age of 35, he was the owner of a magnificent estate of 7,000 acres on the Lynnhaven River. He had earned the title of captain and a seat in the House of Burgesses.

### Named for King's Lynn

According to tradition, the Lynnhaven River bears the name he gave to it in memory of old King's Lynn which he knew and loved so well. The striking



The register of Grimston Parish Church, opened to the page on which the Rev. William Thorowgood recorded the birth of his son, Adam, in 1604.

ter kept by the Rev. William Thorowgood, Adam's father, is there for all to see, not under glass as one would expect so ancient a record to be kept, but

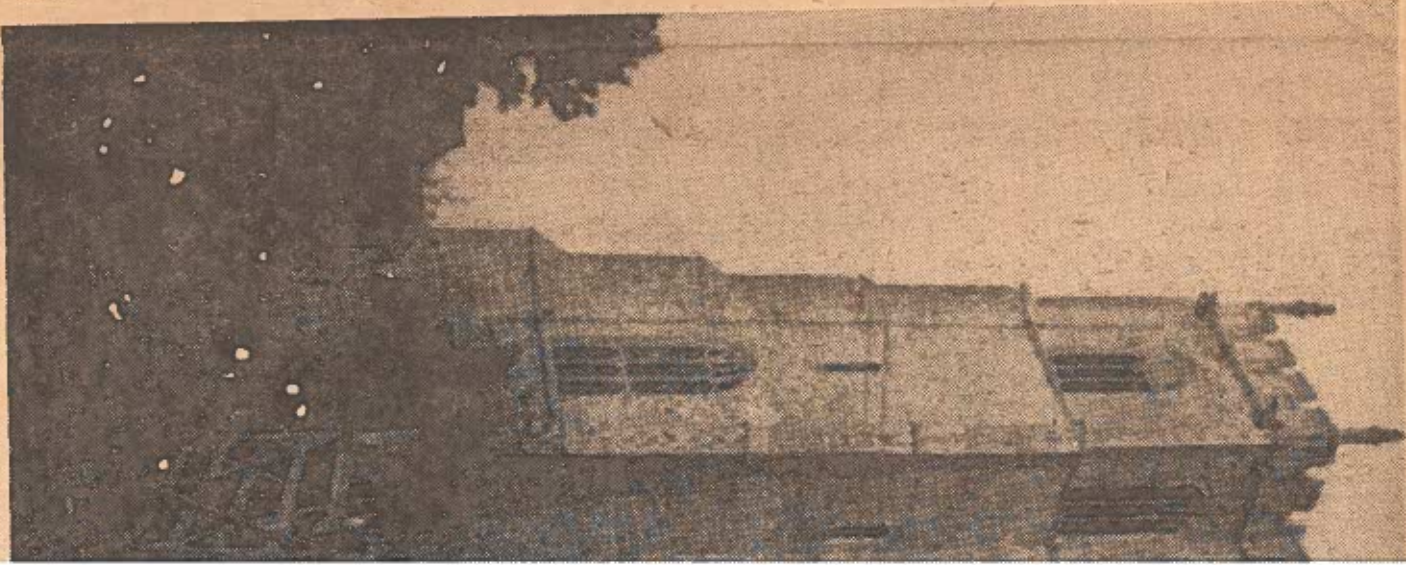
casually in a book-shelf. Occasionally it may be found among magazines and newspapers on a table in the Rectory, readily accessible to all who might desire to browse through its yellowed but remarkably well pre-

servation according to the standards of the times until the anti-papal uprising of the Reformation.

In that period, the parishioners arose in Puritan wrath and destroyed much of the old church's beauty. It is said that Oliver Cromwell himself ordered horses stabled in the Grimston Church to show his contempt of ecclesiastical trappings.

There are other reminders of Adam's youth in Norfolk. Old King's Lynn, for example, has had a life of a thousand years. Its ancient ways and its old harbor have changed little through the centuries.

Saxon Len was king of the



The sleepy old Church of St. Botolph, Grimston.

Lynn which was founded in the previous century as a religious guild. It is now preserved as the largest, oldest and probably most complete example of a medieval Merchant Guild Hall in England.

Reverend Daniel traces of the which Adam found in a field in Church. Bricks, glass and other



which Adam built on the site of the old haven. Not so familiar is the past he left behind in England.

Adam Thorowgood would recognize his birthplace were he to visit it today. Grimsdon has not changed much in the past 350 years. Even King's Lynn, a bustling port town of 30,000, has preserved many reminders of those bygone days.

One may visit Grimsdon and walk past antique walls that Adam no doubt climbed upon as a boy. One may enter the timeless church of St. Botolph, predating the Norman conquest, where Adam's father conducted the Puritan services of his day.

The ancient 13th Century font in which Adam was baptized is still in use. The Saxon cornerstones in the north aisle have a tale almost twice as old to tell, and older still are the Roman bricks in the sturdy walls.

The meticulous church regis-

ters an entry reads, "Adamus filius Mr. Willm Thorowgood Chri Rectori de Grimsdon Baptizatus fuit Domino quinto die mens July anno pax."

This entry is translated from the somewhat imperfect Latin by the Rev. T. Daniels, present rector of Grimsdon Parish, as, "Adam, son of Mr. William Thorowgood, rector of Grimsdon, baptized the fifth day of the month of July in the year predixit."

Now the old Grimsdon Church, which the natives call the Church of St. Botolph, takes on renewed interest. The beautiful old edifice is an eloquent lesson in English history in its own right. From the rude carstone structure of Saxon days, one may trace the addition of pillars and shafts and quoins and mouldings of white stone, of windows, of enlargements. It is a tale of "here a little, and there a little," of constant bea-

1335, Adam Thorowgood's father, although a strong Puritan, held an enquiry in the matter. He ordered "a diligent search should be made after those who had been guilty of a most flagrant crime and act in throwing down the tomb of Sir Benedict de Breccles, Kn, here buried in this church."

The ravages of Puritan fanaticism have been repaired in part, but the old grandeur is gone forever. Today St. Botolph's Church exists serenely as a simple country church.

The unkempt grounds harbor countless graves hidden in the weeds, some unmarked, some identified by lichen-covered stones from which the inscriptions have all but been erased by the forces of wind, rain and time. Inside, beneath the worn stone floor, lie the tombs of rector's long forgotten. From the fragments of Roman brick in the south wall to the electric

Bishop's Lynn. Then, with the Reformation and the dwindling of the Bishop's power, the town fathers changed its name to King's Lynn.

## The Guildhall

The present Guildhall, which Adam Thorowgood surely knew, is a reminder of pre-Reformation days. Built 500 years ago, its handsome front of chequered flint and stone attracts the attention of every visitor to the Saturday marketplace. Its 15th Century window is perfectly preserved, and on the porch the arms of Edward VI and Elizabeth may be seen.

In the Guildhall's strong room is the handsome state sword carried before Adam Thorowgood's brother, Sir Robert Thorowgood, when he became mayor in the year 1656. Its blade is said to have belonged to a sword given by King John.

Beside the antique sword are silver maces of Queen Anne's time, the Red Register containing municipal records from 1204 to 1392 and a magnificent jewelled cup called King John's cup. Among the portraits on the wall are those of Sir Robert Walpole, Lord George Bentinck, Captain George Vancouver and Fanny Burrey who were born in Lynn.

Next door is the Guildhall of St. George, built around 1410 to house the St. George's Guild of

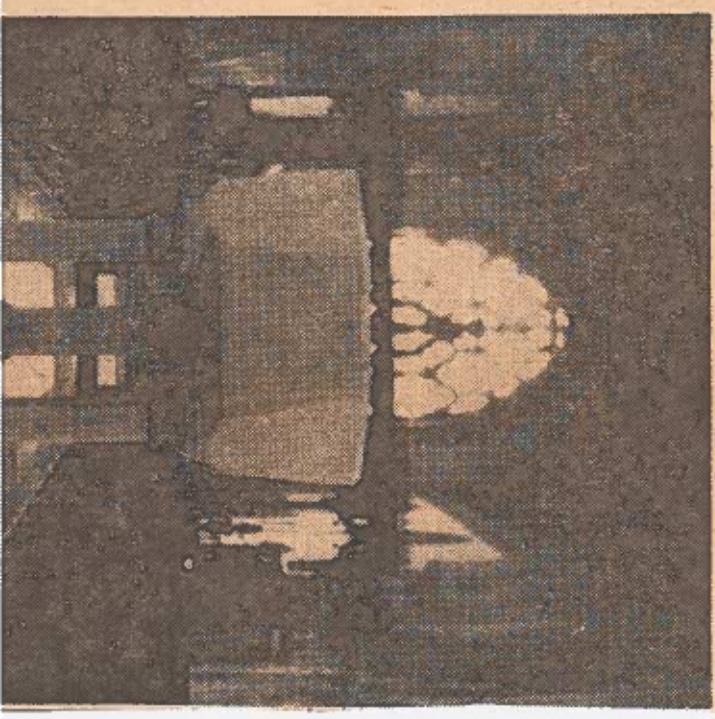
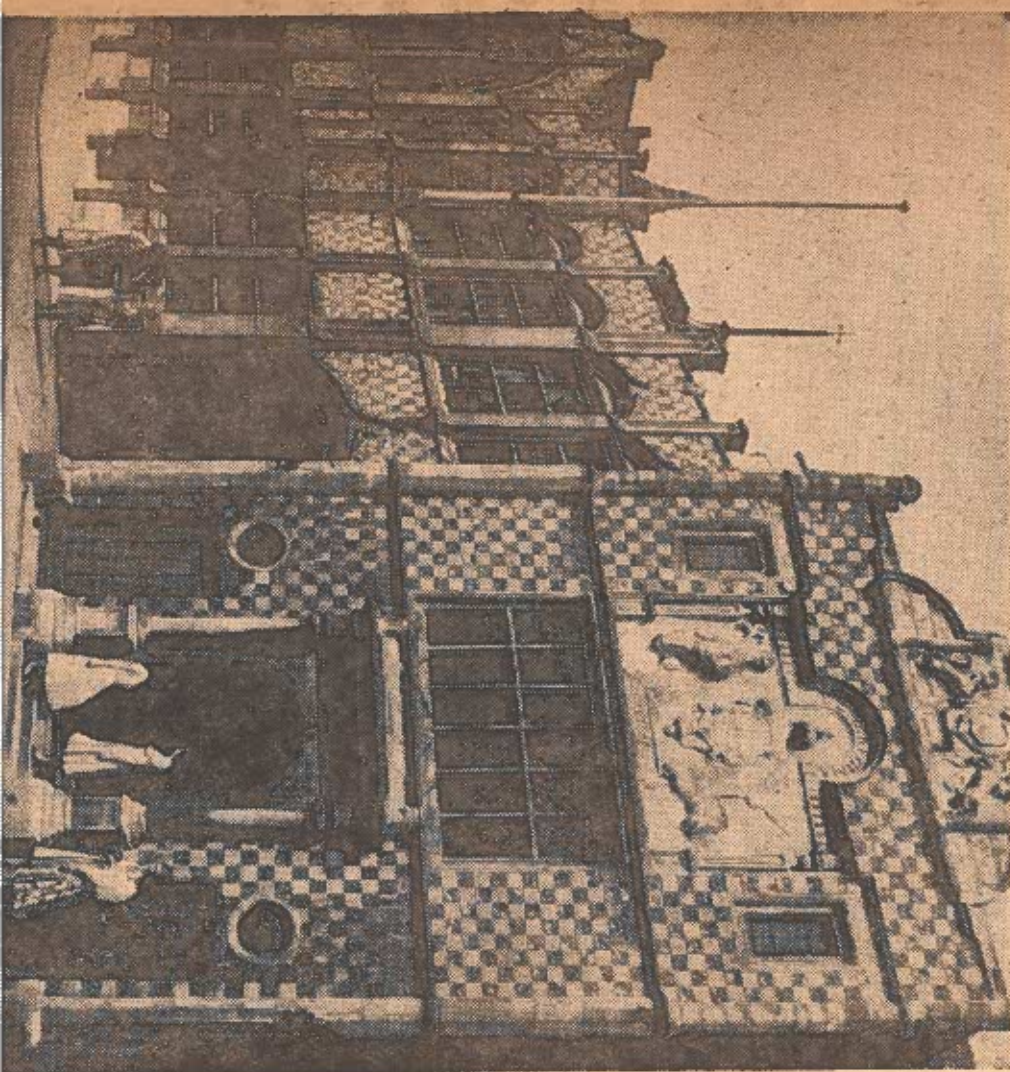
**Tuesday Marketplace**  
In Tuesday Marketplace, one may see homes of merchant princes old in Adam's day. Here stood the pillory; here witches were burned; here the pleasure fair still begins on St. Valentine's Day as it has for over 800 years.

The name of Thorowgood, so illustrious in Cromwell's time, sits no recognition in present Norfolk. No one in Grimsdon or Lynn answers to the name, nor are there any other known descendants in England.

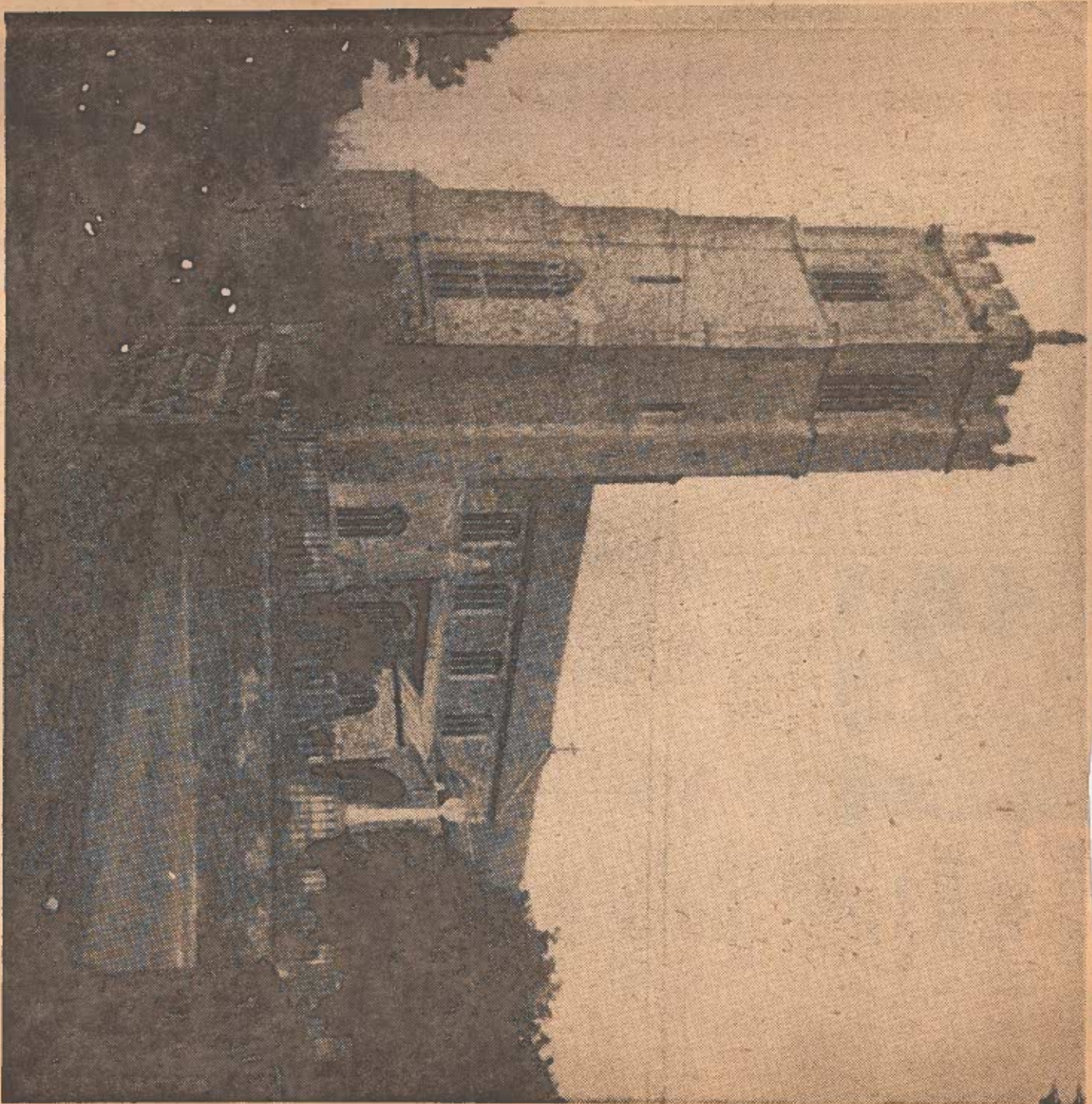
The Reverend T. Daniels, intensely interested in the history of St. Botolph's Church, has made an exhaustive study of the few existing Thorowgood records. His research continues, but to date the only identified descendants of Adam Thorowgood reside in the United States.

This much only of the Thorowgood family in England is known. Of the ten sons of William, four achieved illustrious careers. Adam made his mark in the new world. The eldest, Thomas, succeeded William as Rector of Grimsdon and Congham parishes, serving from 1625 to 1646. Edward became rector of Little Massingham Parish; and Robert, recorded in King's Lynn town records as Sir Robert Thorowgood, earned renown as Mayor of that proud old town.

Perhaps time will add to the Thorowgood story. Efforts of the







The sleepy old Church of St. Botolph, Grimston Parish, England, where Adam Thorowgood worshipped as a boy.

Lynn which was founded in the previous century as a religious guild. It is now preserved as the largest, oldest and probably most complete example of a medieval Merchant Guild Hall in England.

Reverend Daniels point in that direction. In April of this year, traces of the old Rectory in which Adam was born were found in a field near St. Botolph's Church. Bricks, fragments of glass and other remnants of that

Several months ago in Cong-ham Parish, a few miles from Grimston, workmen laying a water pipe unearthed nine

Investigation, is believed to be the burial place of Parishoners who died in the Puritan uprising of Adam Thorowgood's time. Who knows what other roots of Tidewater may be traced to the misty past of Norfolk County in